

COVID-19 Contact Tracing in Schools

Louisiana Department of Health
Office of Public Health

Importance of Contact Tracing

- It is critical to conduct **immediate** contact tracing and identify all students and staff members who have been in close contact with the infected individual
- Contact tracing should be done individually *for each person* identified with COVID-19 in the school
- Contact tracing slows the spread of COVID-19 by identifying people that ***may have been exposed***, asking them to ***monitor their health***, and asking them to ***self-quarantine***
- Timely and thorough contact tracing can effectively interrupt the chain of disease transmission
- Contact tracing is an important public health intervention to prevent or contain an outbreak

By keeping those that may have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others, further transmission may be prevented

Contact Tracing in Schools

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Identifying COVID-19 Infections in Schools

Type of Case	Considered a Case When...	
Lab-confirmed case	Positive COVID-19 viral test result (confirmed case)	Includes: molecular/PCR or antigen tests
Suspect case	Clinical diagnosis of COVID-19	
	OR has at least one of the major COVID symptoms listed to the right	cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or new changes in sense of smell or taste AND no alternative diagnosis
	OR has at least two of the minor COVID symptoms listed to the right	fever (measured or subjective), chills, rigors, muscle ache/myalgia, headache, sore throat, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, congestion/runny nose or fatigue AND no alternative diagnosis

When Someone Has Symptoms But Does Not Meet Clinical or Laboratory Criteria...

They should be sent home and NOT return to school until they are symptom-free for 24 hours

****Note**** Contact tracing does not need to be done for these individuals

Once COVID-19 Cases Are Identified...

End of Self-Isolation Criteria

For a person with ANY symptom(s):	For a person who remained asymptomatic (i.e., never had any symptoms):
At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND	At least 10 days have passed since positive test collection date
At least 24 hours have passed since the resolution of fever without the use of fever reducing medications AND	
Other symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved	

Isolate and send the person home immediately.

They should **NOT** return to school until the listed “end of self-isolation criteria” are met.

Report the case to LDH

The Louisiana Department of Health (LDH), in consultation with the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE), has developed an early warning system for COVID-19 in Louisiana schools.

This case-based secure online reporting system was created to aid schools and public health officials in monitoring and mitigating the potential for school-based outbreaks.

Questions?

Contact: schoolcovidreporting@la.gov

[Regional OPH Offices](#) – for consultation and recommendations upon request

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Steps to Identify & Notify Close Contacts of Suspected or Lab-Confirmed COVID-19 Infections

Determine who has been in close contact with the person with COVID-19 infection in school during their infectious period



Notify close contacts

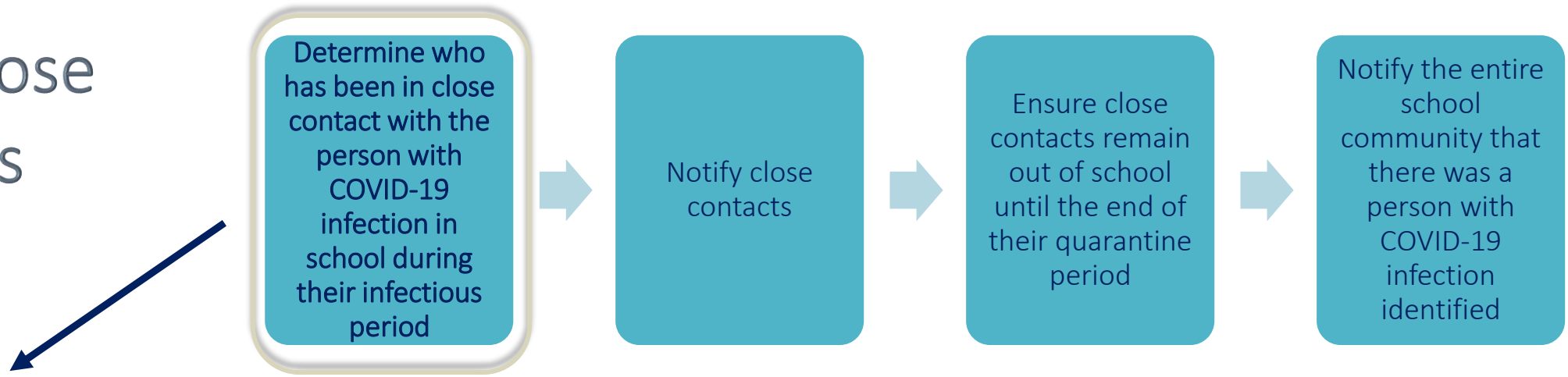


Ensure close contacts remain out of school until the end of their quarantine period



Notify the entire school community that a person with COVID-19 infection has been identified

Identify Close Contacts



- Close contact is defined as:

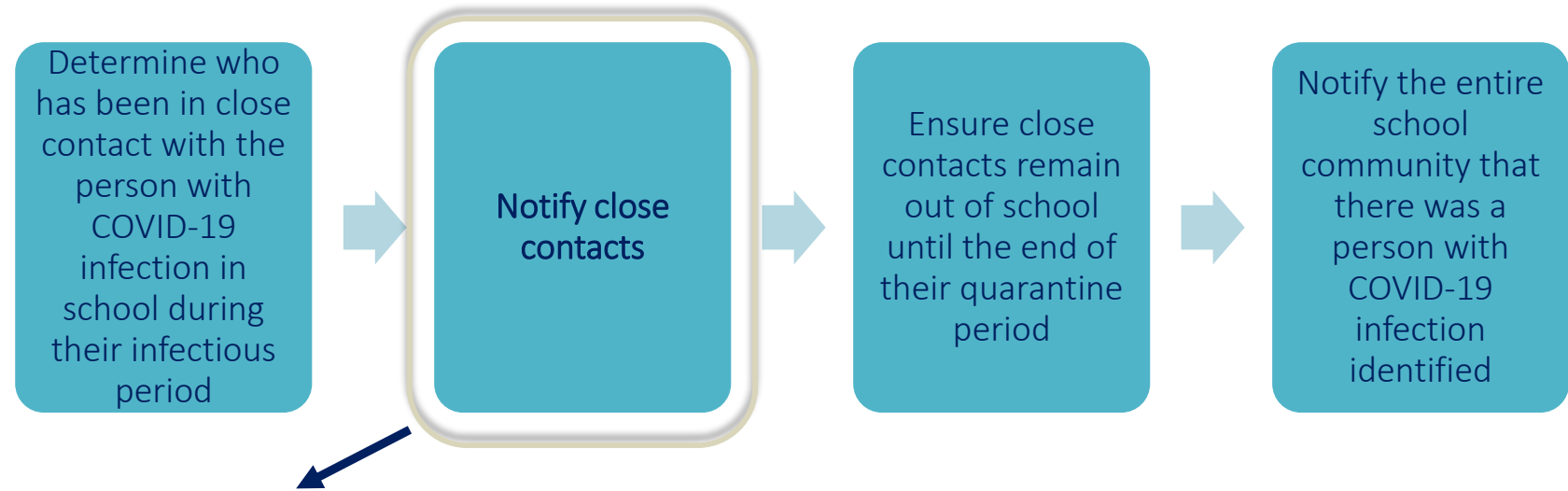
- Being within *6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hr period* **OR**
- Having direct contact with an infected person, including touching, hugging, kissing, or sharing eating or drinking utensils; or if an infected person sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on another person

- The Infectious period includes the **48 hours before** the day the person became sick (or the 48 hours before specimen collection if asymptomatic) until the person was isolated

- Use of face coverings and plastic dividers are **NOT** considered in determining close contacts, though they do *reduce the risk of transmission*.

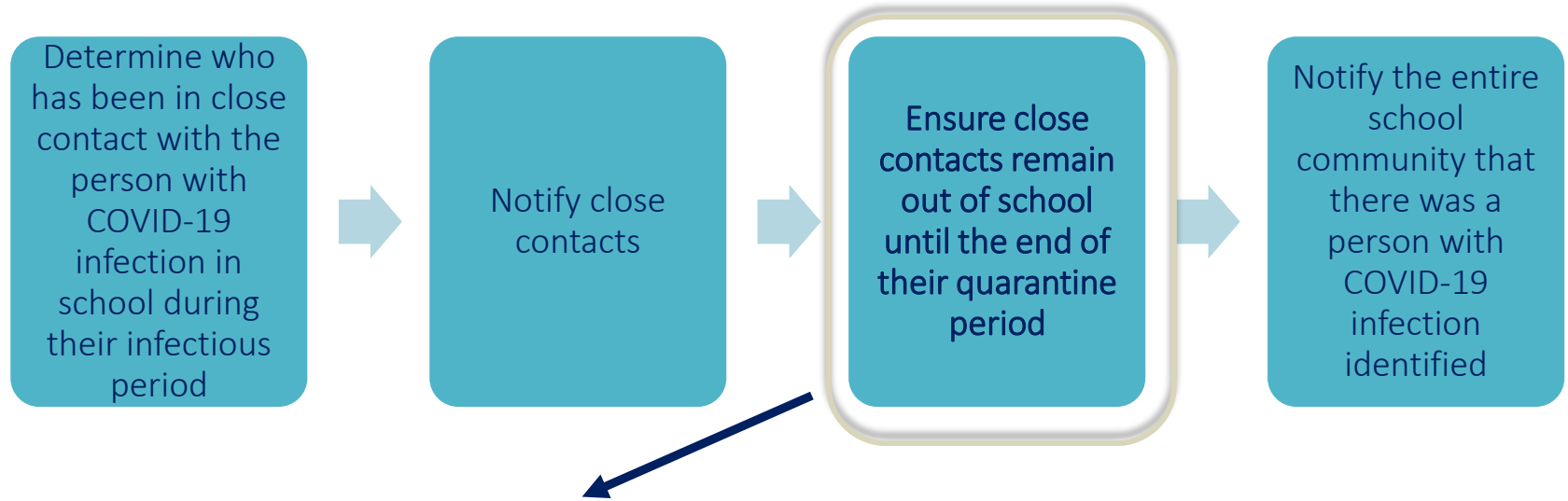
- Identify close contacts that may have occurred during any time or place the person was at school during the infectious period, including in the classrooms, on school buses, during recess or lunch, and during extra-curricular activities.

Notify Close Contacts



- Notify all close contacts that they have been identified as having been exposed to someone who is ill with COVID-19 and will need to *stay out of school* for their quarantine period (Slide 14). A template letter can be provided to the school by the Office of Public Health.
- For suspect cases only, quarantining of close contacts may be delayed up to 48 hours after meeting clinical criteria to allow for the return of molecular/PCR test results or an alternative more likely diagnosis to be made by a physician.
 - If a molecular/PCR test result or alternative more likely diagnosis is not available within 48 hours of meeting clinical criteria, close contacts should be notified and quarantined.
 - If a molecular/PCR test results negative or an alternative more likely diagnosis is made by a physician, close contacts do not need to be quarantined. The symptomatic person should not return to school until they are symptom-free for 24 hours.
- Encourage the close contacts to call the Louisiana Department of Public Health Contact Tracers at 1-877-766-2130.

Ensure Close Contacts Remain Out of School



- Close contacts should not return to school until their quarantine period is complete (see slides 13 and 14).
- If a close contact becomes symptomatic within 14 days of last contact with a case and tests positive, they would be considered a case as of the day their symptoms began and would need to follow “end of self-isolation criteria” found on Slide 6 to return to school.
- If a close contact becomes symptomatic within 14 days of last contact with a case but is not tested, they would be considered a case as of the day their symptoms began and would need to follow “end of self-isolation criteria” found on Slide 6 to return to school.
- If a close contact tests positive but does not develop symptoms, they would be considered a case as of the day their test was collected and would need to follow “end of self-isolation criteria” found on Slide 6 to return to school.

Close contacts previously diagnosed with COVID-19

Certain individuals who were diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last **90 days** do not need to quarantine.

- If they were previously symptomatic within the last 90 days AND they tested positive for COVID-19 by PCR/molecular or antigen test, they do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop.
- If they tested positive for COVID-19 by PCR/molecular or antigen test within 14 days of being identified as a close contact of another COVID-19 case within the last 90 days, they do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop.
- If they were asymptomatic with no known close contact with a COVID-19 case AND tested positive for COVID-19 by PCR/molecular (not antigen test) within the last 90 days, they do not need to quarantine unless symptoms develop.
 - Asymptomatic individuals with no known contact with a COVID-19 case and only a positive antigen test within the last 90 days should self-quarantine.
- If they have symptoms, they should self-quarantine immediately and consult with a medical provider to determine if they may have been re-infected with COVID-19 or if symptoms are caused by something else.

End of Quarantine Criteria

Close contacts should quarantine for 14 days from the last day they were exposed to a suspect or confirmed case.

Options to shorten quarantine are available that require strict adherence to prevention measures such as wearing a mask/face covering through day 14 (see next slide). Because there is an increased risk of post-quarantine transmission associated with options to shorten quarantine, **OPH recommends use of the 14-day quarantine period in daycare and other school settings where masking among children is not maintained.** In addition, due to the high rates of transmission that have been observed among K-12 sports teams, **exposed individuals should not participate in athletic events where distancing and/or masking is not maintained until the full 14-day quarantine has been completed.**

Close contacts who develop symptoms on or before day 14 after their last exposure are considered suspect cases regardless of meeting criteria for a shortened quarantine and should self-isolate immediately and seek testing.

Options to Shorten Quarantine

Options to shorten the duration of quarantine if contacts remain asymptomatic include:

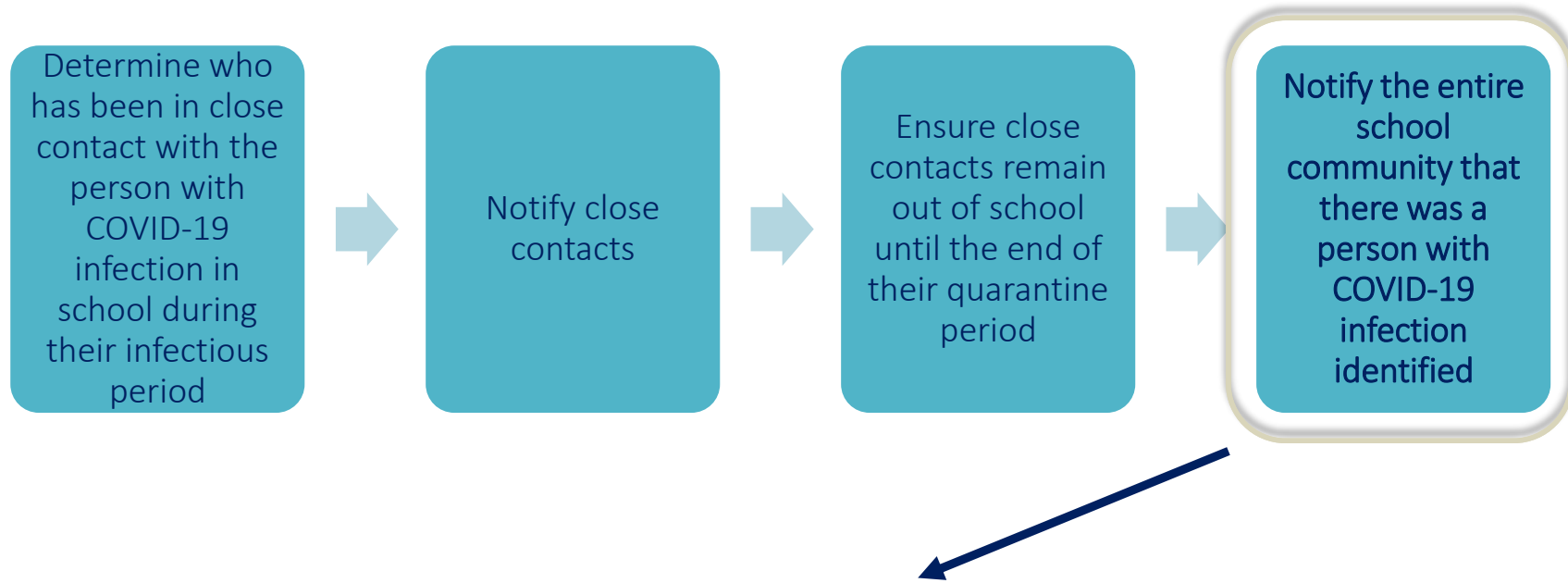
- *If no symptoms develop during quarantine **AND** they have a negative antigen or PCR/molecular test collected no earlier than day 5 after their last exposure: they may quarantine for 7 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case **OR***
- *If no symptoms develop during quarantine and no testing is done: they may quarantine for 10 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case.*

If quarantine is shortened, daily symptom monitoring and strict adherence to prevention measures including social distancing, hand washing, and especially wearing masks/face coverings, should continue until a full 14 days from last contact with a COVID-19 case.

If a negative PCR test is received on a suspect case

- The symptomatic person with a negative PCR test result may return to school after they are symptom free for 24 hours
- Quarantine of close contacts may be immediately discontinued and those individuals may return to school

Notify the Entire School Community



OPH recommends notifying the entire school community that there was a person with COVID-19 infection identified and close contacts *have been notified*

Cleaning & Disinfection According to CDC Guidelines

Close off areas used by the persons with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical before cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets



Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area



If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection

Clean and disinfect all areas (e.g., offices, bathrooms, and common areas) used by the person(s) with COVID-19, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces



Surfaces should be cleaned using soap (or a detergent) and water prior to disinfection.

For disinfection, most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Check [EPA's list of disinfection products](#).

See full [CDC Cleaning, Disinfection, and Hand Hygiene in Schools Guidance](#).

School Resources Online

ldh.la.gov/cv19schools



LOUISIANA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Secretary
DR. COURTNEY N. PHILLIPS

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CONTACT TRACING

COVID-19 NEWS

COVID-19 OUTBREAKS

GUIDANCE & RESOURCES

HEALTH WORK CONNECT

COVID-19 Resources for Schools

- **LA School Reporting Guide** - This user guide provides step-by-step instructions for reporting COVID-related illnesses among school students or staff.
- **COVID Schools Worksheet** - This tool assists schools with collecting important information when a parent or staff member calls to report a COVID-related illness.
- **LDH COVID Contact Tracing in Schools** - This is a step-by-step guide for responding to a COVID-related illness in a school, including guidance for how to identify close contacts in a school setting.
- **Contact Tracing Worksheet for School Staff and Parents** - This form can be provided to parents or staff awaiting test results to help them identify close contacts and be ready to relay the information to the LDH contact tracing team.
- **PPE for Schools** - This one-page guide provides information about the appropriate use of personal protective equipment in schools.

